

Not a week goes by during the NFL season without tens of millions of viewers seeing televised public service announcements by star football players featured in community service and saluting the work of the United Way and other worthy causes. Imagine the public service that would be rendered if the NFL, starting this Super Bowl Sunday, was to sponsor advertisements in which NFL stars help to spread the word that real men don't beat up women and domestic violence is inexcusable.

We look forward to working with you to find constructive ways that we can team up with the NFL to wage an effective national campaign against domestic violence wherever it occurs.

Sincerely yours,

CONSTANCE A. MORELLA,
Member of Congress.
BERNARD SANDERS,
Member of Congress.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT [PSA]

The PSA is set at a crowded football stadium. Various messages flash on the stadium scoreboard, such as: "Chevy Nova License # JRZ-847 You Left Your Lights On," and "Happy 8th Birthday to Alex Burnard." Suddenly, the stadium becomes eerily silent as fans and players look up at a new message: "Greg Niel, Sec. 829, Seat 12 Roughed Up His Girlfriend Last Night." Close-ups of fans and players looking at the scoreboard in shock and disgust appear.

An athlete on the field takes off his helmet and addresses the camera, "If you think hitting a woman makes you a big man, you won't mind if we let 70,000 people see just how big you are." A voice over intones, "Every 12 seconds a woman in this country is abused. Isn't it time to speak up? Get involved, end relationship violence. Love is *not* abuse. To help or get help, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE."

The spot was created by Liz Claiborne's advertising agency, New York-based Gotham, Inc., and directed by Robert Logevall of Bruce Dowad Associates. Distribution plans for this fall include showcasing the PSA in stadiums at college football games around the country beginning in October, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and broadcasting it during regional television coverage of college football games.

PSA PARTNERS

PSA project partners Liz Claiborne Inc., Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society, and the College Football Association are promoting the concept that it will take "intergender collaboration"—men and women working together—to end relationship violence. The partnership also represents the uniting of both the private and public sectors to create social change, which Liz Claiborne hopes will serve as a model for other companies and non-profit organizations to follow.

The Center for the Study of Sport in Society, a center of Northeastern University, seeks to increase awareness of sport and its relation to society, and to develop activist programs that identify problems, offer solutions, and promote the benefits of sport. Sport in Society's Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Project was established to increase the participation of student-athletes in campus-based efforts to prevent all forms of men's violence against women, and to inspire men to take a leadership position with this issue.

The College Football Association is the organization which unites 70 Division I-A

major football playing institutions and includes the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big 12, Southeastern, and Western Athletic conferences. The College Football Association provides a forum in which member institutions discuss issues unique to major college football.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION

HON. GEORGE E. BROWN, JR.

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, September 28, 1996

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Administration is sitting on a scandal of immense proportions that has been kept under wraps by a conspiracy of silence inside the Washington beltway.

Every day, millions of deserving Americans are being short-changed billions of dollars in hard-earned Social Security benefits, yet very little is being done about it. In my southern California district, retired workers caught up in this debacle are owed on average \$1,000 in back Social Security payments. Some have been shorted by as much as \$4,500–\$7,000 in back payments.

How could this be?

In response to constituent complaints, I have been investigating the handling of earnings reports filed with the Social Security Administration. I have discovered that what seemed like isolated incidences of wages not being credited to individuals' records is actually a long-standing immense problem that exists nationwide. The SSA procedure for posting wage and self-employment returns has pitfalls previously unknown to most working Americans, and even many Social Security employees themselves.

For five decades, poor record-keeping, managerial mistakes, sloppy bookkeeping on the part of too many employers, and bureaucratic errors have caused a problem so large that seemingly nobody now wants to admit that it exists, let alone tackle it head on.

The evidence of this massive problem resides in what the SSA calls the suspense file, where earnings are placed with the SSA is notable to match the name and Social Security number from an annual wage report to an existing worker's Social Security record. Reasons earnings are not credited to workers account abound, but among the most common are typographical errors on employers' wage reports, such as unreadable data, first or middle name used as surname, and other mistakes occurring with unfamiliar names of workers of diverse countries of origin. When a match cannot be made, the employers' wage report is thrown into the suspense file, under the assumption that the correct owner of those wages will come forward in the future to claim the credits. The crux of the problem stems from the fact that many people never know that they are missing credits, even after retirement, and even if it causes a reduction in their benefits.

Even when the employer reports correctly, the SSA's strict matching policy results in wage reports going into the suspense file. Women who do not change their names on

the SSA's data bank will often lose credit for earnings until they do.

The adverse impact of this ticking time bomb on working Americans is staggering. These mismatches, whether they be the fault of shoddy employer practices or the inflexibility of the SSA's strict matching policy, have the practical effect of denying millions of Americans up to hundreds of dollars on their monthly retirement or disability income. The overall numbers are mind-boggling and, quite frankly, I am astounded that a problem of this magnitude has not received the attention of the public, the media, Congress, or the administration.

Unfortunately, left to their own devices the SSA has few incentives to correct this decades-old problem. The FICA taxes are paid and credited to the Social Security Trust Fund whether or not the individual employee gets credit for them. Computer operations that could easily detect many mismatches are expensive and have no priority in budget-setting. I am told that lack of knowledge of the extent of the problem has prevented claims staffs in local offices from being effective in finding and crediting lost wage earnings.

The first step in fully addressing this problem is to assess the scope of the problem in terms of its impact on Social Security retiree benefits. The next step is to determine how to reconcile the wage reports currently in the suspense file to the rightful owner and to put in place a system that will prevent future mismatches, potentially leading to the loss of substantial benefits.

Today, I introduced legislation to address this serious problem. My bill calls on the SSA to take immediate action to determine and implement an effective procedure to reconcile the wage reports currently in the suspense file to the rightful owner and put in place a system that will prevent future mismatches.

In addition, my bill requires the SSA and IRS to submit a plan of action to Congress for eliminating the backlog of uncredited earnings in the suspense file and resolving new discrepancies and any additional resources which the SSA would require to carry out this mission.

The Federal Government should strive for nothing less than 100-percent accuracy for the American wage earner. I will not rest until I am convinced that the SSA and Congress have done everything possible to ensure that hard-working Americans are receiving every dime in retirement benefits that they deserve.

Bob Dole, the Republican nominee for President, does not let a campaign day go by without promising every American a raise in the form of a 15-percent income tax cut. If the Congress were to tackle the suspense file snafu within SSA, we would be able to provide an immediate raise to millions of hard-working American families by simply doing what is right and keeping faith with the Social Security promise.

I invite my colleagues to cosponsor this bill and join with me in sending out a clear message that we will not rest until we are convinced that the SSA and Congress have done everything possible to ensure that American wage earners are receiving every dime in retirement benefits that they deserve.